

September 11, 2001 (i)

Here are two people's memories of 9/11.

Memory 1

Adam was working on a ferry, taking people across the Hudson River, when the twin towers were attacked. He and his crew evacuated people from lower Manhattan throughout the day.

"I was dropping people off at the World Financial Center dock, close to the World Trade Center, when I saw the first plane streaking north to south across the sky and slam into the North Tower. There was huge flash, then a bang, then you could feel the heat on your face. From that moment, my crew, along with our whole fleet of about 30 boats, would be working flat out all day trying to evacuate people from Manhattan to New Jersey and Brooklyn.

After the second plane hit we were told by the coastguard to standby on the New Jersey side of the Hudson River. But the boats' captains and crew had already decided to go back and help. If anyone who was on those boats say they weren't scared they were lying.

Thousands of people wanted to get on our boats, but we could only take 400 people a time. We tried to give priority to the injured but there were so many people jumping off the sea wall on to the decks of our boats we had to take as many as we could. It got a lot worse when debris started falling and people started jumping from the towers. We told the passengers it was just debris to try to keep the situation under control. There was a lot of panic and screaming going on.

We were back at the World Financial Center ferry dock when the first tower collapsed. You could see the debris coming towards us, and then blinding and choking everyone. We were all covered in tower debris, as were our boats.

We carried on working for 16 hours bringing firefighters, emergency workers and supplies from New Jersey to New York.

The most touching thing to see that day was the firefighters we brought over walking off towards Ground Zero and the civilians clapping and offering water to them. That day, everything changed."

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Memory 2

Jay was a fire captain on 11 September 2001. He and his unit were inside the North Tower of the World Trade Center when it collapsed.

“We were one of the earliest fire units to respond to the emergency at the World Trade Center. We were in the North Tower when the second plane hit the South Tower.

We got to the 27th floor when the South Tower collapsed so we started to retreat. Once we got to around the 20th floor, we saw a woman in distress, and stopped to rescue her. We were carrying her downstairs and made it to the fourth floor when the North Tower collapsed with us still inside. When it came down on top of us, I felt like we were dead men walking.

I really felt that we would be very lucky if we made it out of there. As it turns out, we did, but we were extremely fortunate to have been in that one little spot that remained partly intact, a little bubble of safety, where the rest of the building was ripped to shreds. The area we were in was the geographic centre of the tower. The collapse kind of ran out of energy when it got to us. It was all twisted and filled with rubble but it was survivable. The rubble pile itself was about seven storeys tall.

We were trapped in there for about four hours. The smoke and dust eventually cleared to the point where sunshine started hitting the area where we were trapped. That allowed us to look outside and thankfully we saw some of our fellow firefighters off in the distance. We called out to them and we managed to free ourselves before they got to us.

There were 14 of us in a little hole and we all survived. But we lost 11 people in our firehouse that day. The names of some of the men lost are printed on fire engines. There was a fire chief a little bit further down from us, who we were speaking to, who died while we were trapped. But I wouldn't do anything differently, that's what firemen do.

We experienced not only the horror of the collapse, we also experienced the fear and the horror as events were taking place. We saw people jumping. We saw debris falling and crashing.

I've definitely gone through emotional changes in dealing with the events of that day. I try now to cherish little moments, especially with my kids, as best as I can.”

London Bombing 7/7 (i)

G--- survived the London bomb attacks which killed 52 people and injured 700. She lost both legs below the knees.

“It was an absolutely normal day. I was running late, that’s the only thing that was probably abnormal about it. I’m always early for everything. I didn’t get a seat on the tube train, I shoved on like everybody else. It felt probably like it was a minute, if not less into the journey, and then like that, everything changed.

It’s a really strange thing to describe, but the best way I can describe it is that suddenly it feels like I was falling in black thick liquid or tar. I couldn’t breathe, and there was, there were just screams, and it was the whole, the whole environment was changed, it was like being transported almost in a parallel world, you know, that you’ve gone from a bright sunny day to suddenly, you know, the bowels of the earth have opened up and you’re somewhere completely different.

And I remember also feeling that I needed to be calm and slow everything down because if, because I was listening to people screaming around me and one woman was very clear in saying that she was dying, someone needs to help her, and these screams were quite loud and I just thought, “I can’t panic, I can’t join in that scream because then my heart will be pumping out too much blood.” So somehow I needed to divorce myself from what was going on and try and be as calm as possible.

I just fixed it on my watch face and waited and I don’t know how long I waited really. But then I did see the torch, and I did see someone coming toward me, and a hand on my shoulder saying “priority one, it’s OK,” and after that, it’s bits and pieces that I can remember.

I don’t feel any anger at all toward, toward the, the poor guy that was susceptible enough to, I guess almost be a victim himself, you know and I feel, I do feel deeply sad for their families and particularly for the guy that, that killed himself on my tube who has now, I believe his wife has had a little baby, and I just, I just think that there’s something so sad about that, that she’s unable to show grief publicly, that this child now will grow up, with an understanding of what his father has done and just the lives that have been destroyed for no apparent reason.

continued on page 113...

London Bombing 7/7 (ii)

... continued from page 112

You can't, you know, to a certain degree I feel that they have died in vain almost, and I think that that's, that's very sad.

I now understand that I was taken to the ticket barrier area of Russell Square station and it all seems like there was complete chaos. I also understand that I was the last person to be brought up, alive. If it wasn't for the bravery of those people [who brought me out], I wouldn't be sitting here today talking to you, and I'm so thankful to be alive.

And, I'm still me, and I'm still able to get around, I will walk again. Life is precious and I feel like I've definitely been given life number two. I think to sort of look at how the day has changed me, what I feel quite happy about is that I'm still me and I think that there hasn't been a great change in that. I'm hoping that the change will keep evolving in remembering to live, remembering to let go of the rubbish that clouds our daily life, and I think that is the change, to remind myself everyday.

I'm hoping that the change I would like to see in myself is that I don't take my life back to how it was prior to the bomb that I do have a better life, and a life that is richer through this. So if anything, I'd say I'm looking at a positive change, rather than a negative one."


from the BBC website

news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/4426434.stm

Terrorism

Questions

1. Choose one of the memories and write about how it made you feel.



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2. Did the person in the memory you chose seem brave to you? If so, what did they do that was brave?




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3. Do you think these events had a big impact on these people’s lives and on the lives of those around them?



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Terrorism

Age range

- Years 3/4 (SP4/5).
- Years 5/6 (SP6/7).

Resources

Copies of the worksheets.

Using the worksheet

Obviously, this is a huge topic and a full study of terrorism or these events and their impact on history is beyond the scope of this book and is better approached in Key Stage 3. However, there is no denying that terrorism was one of the defining elements of the 2000s and no review of the decade is complete without a discussion of terrorism. The attack on the Twin Towers in New York, not only informed American foreign and domestic policy, but affected the entire world in many ways.

The attack on the London Underground had a lesser impact, as it came after 9/11 and the attack in Spain, but also had a huge impact on British foreign and domestic policies.

In order to make this topic more age appropriate, we have included some readings here that focus on individual people's experiences of horrific events, and not on terrorism per se. Students can read these accounts and discuss how these people felt and how they responded to the situation. In most cases, ordinary people acted with extraordinary bravery and you may want to compare the way these people acted with the way that everyone pulled together during the Battle of Britain in WWII.

The questions also focus on this aspect of terrorism, and can provide a starting point to discuss how people have remembered these events and their importance.

You may also like to compare these incidents with the terrorism in Northern Ireland in the 1970s.

As with similar topics, you will need to be extremely sensitive when discussing terrorism as some of your students may have been affected either by terrorist incidents, or by being a member of a group that has seen increased scrutiny because of terrorism.

Younger students

You may need to be careful that some students do not become upset when discussing unpleasant events. To avoid this, you may want to read one of the readings out loud and answer the questions as a class discussion.

Outcomes

The students can:

- Think about the impact that terrorist events had on the 2000s.
- Extract information from a text.
- Learn about the positive ways that people acted and worked together when under attack.
- Understand that terrorist attacks in the 2000s affected many ordinary people.

Older students

The students may like to research more memories of these events. You can find posters and photos of 9/11 on www.loc.gov/exhibits/911/911-prints.html.

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